

ALTERNATIVE LIFE STYLES IN RICH COUNTRIES

A Think Piece¹⁾

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Is there a need for alternative life styles?

There seem today to be two ways of arguing in favour of alternative life styles in the rich countries, one of them negative, the other positive.

The negative point of departure is the one that is most commonly used in the debate because it ties in with the general feeling of 'crisis', particularly after the oil boycott organized by the OPEC countries. At this point, however, it should be noted that the feeling of an impending crisis may be almost a defining characteristic of western civilization, one of those things that moves people into action, mobilizes new forces and for that reason contributes to the generally expansive nature of western civilization in general and western capitalism in particular.²

Most thinking in this connection is tied to our consumption styles, and one talks with justification about 'high-consumption, high-energy societies'. Underlying this is a vision of 'low-consumption, low-energy societies'. But we have to spell this out: 'consumption' and 'energy' with respect to what?

Since material factors and energy are at stake, this is no doubt with respect to material needs, such as the needs (not necessarily in order of priority) for: food, clothing, housing, health care, the implements of education and transportation and communication facilities. By and large the problem of the Third world countries is to guarantee for all a social minimum, a floor, where the recourses needed for the satisfaction of these needs are concerned. But there is also the corresponding problem of the industrialized countries: to define and live according to the idea of a social maximum, a ceiling beyond which we should not go. And that leads us straight into the negative reason for arguing in favor of new and lower-consumption life styles.

More precisely, there seem to be four lines of thinking that all lead to the same conclusion - that the present expansion of consumption cannot continue - and hence to a rationale for a discussion of a ceiling to consumption, a social maximum.

First, there is the idea of nature's limited capacity. For all seven resources mentioned above material production is needed (e.g. to produce hospitals and schools, health equipment and textbooks); nature is finite, and would not allow an application of the Kantian principle of consuming as if the rule of your action could be a universal rule. Thus, if everybody in the world were to have housing area equivalent in size to that available to the rich people in the industrialized countries, resources (among them land and space) would rapidly be exhausted, particularly if the needs of future generations are taken into consideration.³

Second, there is the idea of man's limited capacity. For all seven resources above the old principle of the golden mean seems to apply: too much food is evil, too much living space makes communication between family members difficult, too much communication leads to information overload, etc. It may be argued that this does not apply to, for instance, health, and in an abstract sense there is of course no upper limit to how healthy we can be. But there is an upper limit to the consumption of health services, as has been argued forcefully recently by Ivan Illich:⁴ to become a client in that system, i.e. a 'patient', may in itself produce ill health. There is a point beyond which consumption of the resources becomes counter-productive to need-satisfaction.⁵

Third, there is the idea of a limit to inequality. When some countries or some people, and particularly when some people in some countries, have much more of these goods than others have they possess a resource that can be converted into power. For instance, if the élite in a country has access to better health services than others (or easier access to the same health services, which amounts to the same⁶) this may increase their life expectancy. Lower morbidity may make them more efficient and lower mortality makes them last longer; to last longer, in turn, means more time to accumulate experience that can be converted into power over others. Thus, the argument has been and will continue to be that there is a limit to how much inequality the world as a whole and the individual country can stand without becoming a caricature of what a society with a minimum of built-in social justice should be like.

Fourth, there is a limit to exploitation. The raw materials to meet these seven needs have to come from somewhere, and the question is asked with increasing force: could it be that this 'somewhere' could use these raw materials themselves, even that they could make better use of them or at least that they have more need for them? This question can be asked in a developed/developing countries context, but it can equally well be asked in a developed/developing district context within countries all over the world. It is a general Centre/Periphery problem, since under the dominant economic system in the world today production factors are moved towards the Centre, where raw materials, labor and capital are brought together in big organizations so as to produce to meet demands, particularly those articulated in the Centre.

Take, for example, the consumption of meat. According to the first argument the consumption should be lowered because there is not enough grassland, etc. that through cattle can be converted (inefficiently) into meat - that land should be used for other purposes. According to the second argument, too high meat consumption should be avoided on the grounds that it is dangerous to health. According to the third argument consumption should be equalized so that all peoples and/or races are equally physically strong, since strength may be converted into any kind of power.⁷ According to the fourth argument meat consumption drains resources away from Periphery countries that need them for their own need-satisfaction - maybe to produce meat for their own masses. In each case the conclusion, lower meat consumption in the Centre countries, is the same, but the premisses are somewhat different. To what extent all, some or none of the four arguments are empirically tenable varies in time and space; usually if one does not hold, one of the others does - for such is the nature of our Centre/Periphery world.

One could now argue further and say that ^{if} the present trend continues all these four factors will take on an increasingly serious character. Thus, nature would be depleted and polluted, man would be even more of an over-consumer than today, the gaps, the inequalities would continue to expand and the exploitation would take such magnitudes that sooner or later peripheries within and between countries would organize themselves into action considerably more dramatic and belligerent than the very limited, highly

non-violent action initiated by the OPEC countries. No imagination is required to spell this out in detail; it is unnecessary, but it constitutes a rich basis of negative arguments in favor of alternative life styles.

Let us then turn to the positive arguments. There are good reasons why they should be emphasized much more; they immediately change the focus of the debate in a more constructive direction and may also generate a type of optimism that can be converted into imaginative action. Obviously, the negative approach will also call for imagination and creativity - but it is just as likely to call for efforts to preserve the status quo (with some very minor and largely symbolic concessions). Among these efforts the obvious possibilities are military intervention, direct or indirect, and incursions in general into Third World countries, fostering more or less fascist regimes inside industrialized and Third World countries alike. Hence the urgent need for more positive argumentation.

One way of arguing here could be based on answers to the question: what do people in rich countries do when they are in a position to do what they want to do? One simple way of approaching that problem would be to study what such people do during vacations. The idea of paid mass vacation is a rather recent one whereas the idea of upper-class leisure is ancient - it is the former, not the latter, that is of interest here. The answer we get from studying these patterns of behavior is certainly not an unambiguous one, but there are some relatively clear patterns. And many of them go in one direction: to indicate that many people seek a simpler life. In practice this means that almost no effort is spared in order to get to a primitive hut, a camping place, in general to places where one can live in much closer contact with nature, be close together (for instance in a small tent or a trailer), perhaps get food more directly from nature through hunting, fishing and gathering, engage in some physical work, etc. When saying 'no effort is spared', we try to indicate that this form of vacation is not necessarily, when seen in its entirety, a low-consumption, low-energy form. Thus, considerable energy is sometimes used (e.g. in the use of charter flights) in order to take people to the object of a simpler life. But this may also be seen as a result of distortions that have taken place in our societies, and not as

a necessary mechanism - just as is the fact that many people seek not low- but high-consumption life during their vacations, and save money during the rest of the year for that purpose. ⁸

Without necessarily idealizing people's vacation behavior let us now try to see what people seem to be after during that month or so of the year. One thing is absolutely clear: they want exactly an alternative life style, and the simple hypothesis might be put forward that those who enjoy (or suffer from) high consumption during their ordinary life seek low-consumption life styles during vacation, and vice versa. To the extent that this is true one might take a lead from that point and suggest that the good society would be precisely the society that could offer a number of different life styles, not only one life style different from the high-consumption, high-energy one dominating the industrialized world today. That idea will be developed later, suffice it here only to point out the following: whether people go in for one form or the other during their vacation they seem to try to organize themselves so that certain immaterial needs are satisfied. What are these immaterial needs?

One short list might look like this: togetherness, friendship, love, sex; free time, i.e. unprogrammed time; experience, new challenges, new inputs; some opportunity for creativity, work rather than job; self-realization, self-actuation, self-fulfilment; well-being, happiness; a sense of the meaning of life, of existence.

It is unnecessary to go into definition or any philosophical discussion of these terms - they can be taken just at their surface meaning, in a simple, unanalysed way, since that is the way people in general take them. Nor is it necessary to go into any detail as to how modern, rich, industrial society has a tendency to counteract many of these needs, perhaps all of them. One point should be made, however: the assumption is that this is what people seek during vacation, not necessarily what they get. Mass tourism, for instance, may offer many opportunities for togetherness, but time will tend to be programmed, with little scope for creativity, not many of one's own abilities have penetrated into our leisure time.

But the positive approach to the problem of alternative life styles is not simply a question of asking what the style of

life is that gives a high level of satisfaction of immaterial needs. Something also happens to the approach to material needs; not that the needs disappear but their mode of satisfaction changes. As mentioned earlier: in some vacation pattern there is a search for more genuine foods, if possible for food that is unmediated by industrial food processing. Clothing becomes more informal, often more personalized - and this type of clothing has already to some extent penetrated daily life. The style of housing changes: it is interesting to note that people when they are on holiday often seem to live more closely together, to the point that there is more physical contact, more immediate awareness of other people's bodily existence. As to health, there is the idea of seeking health directly, through nature, through a healthy life. And the same with education; although this factor is subdued through mass tourism and certain values associated with vacation (don't bring your work with you!), one can say that many people in fact get a very substantial educational stimulus during vacation, often in a non-formal way without knowing it.⁹

What about transportation and communication? While not denying the tremendous importance of motorized vacation, it is also clear that the vacation is the period when people 'regress' to more 'primitive' ways of moving around: hiking, cycling, riding, canoeing, etc. Again the point is the same: the motorized, modernized part is often a way of getting people to the place where a simpler life can be enjoyed. Moreover, it is probably a period when people engage much more in conversation.

In other words: this is the period in which material needs are satisfied in a different way, often a simpler way, and where more scope is given to the immaterial. With all the provisos mentioned above we permit ourselves to take this as an indication of two things: not only that many people want an alternative life style, and are willing to sacrifice quite a lot in order to get it, but also that the alternative life style, at least for very many people, seems to be located in the general direction of simplicity. If it could be demonstrated that everybody during their vacation only tried to get more of what they get anyhow in ordinary life, then this would be a tremendous affirmation of ordinary life and leave little scope for basic change.

Hence, we can derive some optimism from people's vacation behavior: the many and obvious deviations from the pattern we have indicated may to a large extent be seen as penetration or spill-over from industrialized society into the leisure sector, sometimes even as a deliberate fight against alternative styles.

Alternative life styles: a sketch

In general, then, our model of lower-consumption alternative life style for rich countries would take as a point of departure the dialectic between working time and leisure time, 'regular life' and 'vacation life' as indicated above - always tempered by the dire necessity (for the four reasons mentioned) of a social minimum for Third World societies at the lower level of material consumption and energy consumption. And a general model, formulated in one sentence, would not be to argue in favor of one alternative style to the present one, but of alternative styles within the same country. Generally speaking: how could the positive elements of the vacation style mentioned above expand from, let us say, 10 per cent of our annual cycle today to 25, 33 or 50 per cent, perhaps to 66 or 75 per cent? What kind of mix could we imagine in our societies between what we have today and another style, making it possible, even easy, for people to oscillate between the two?

The answer to this is clearly not to go on holiday for half of the year or three-quarters of the year - for the vacation as we know it today is itself a product of the society in which we live and has certain highly artificial characteristics, some of them mentioned above. Rather, the point would be to let some of the positive characteristics penetrate our existence more profoundly. One way of approaching that problem would be to ask how production and consumption for material needs could take place in such a way that immaterial needs would be much better satisfied.

Let us try to say something about this, taking the material needs one by one. The general tenor of these remarks certainly goes in the direction of a lower level of material consumption, in other words the lower level of what today is defined as standard of living, but only in so far as this leads to a higher level of satisfaction, of happiness, of meaningfulness. It is further assumed that work could more deliberately be organized into sectors: one that is highly capital- and research-intensive, even automated, in other words with very high productivity, and another sector,

which would be dominant in many regards, that would be more labor-intensive. In general, formal, regulated work would occupy fewer hours than it does today and give more time for informal work of a more labor-intensive character, to some extent re-creating crafts, local production, small economic cycles, etc. This can best be discussed by looking at the material needs one by one. But the general logic is clear; rather than a high-productivity society supported by some pockets of low productivity (e.g. the family, the vacation patterns mentioned), it would be a low-productivity society supported by a high-productivity sector. The general thrust would be towards low-consumption, low-energy societies by strengthening such sectors of society. An immediate implication is reduced production and consumption for non-basic material needs. But the basic material needs are still there, and the question is how they can be satisfied in a way that at the same time can satisfy immaterial needs.

Food. There is scope for highly intensive agriculture and industrial food production, but there is also scope for more home production. Thus, why couldn't apartment houses have good collective ovens for baking bread just as today many of them have collective facilities for laundry? Then there is the general movement towards some way of growing food even in one's own apartment, using all kinds of devices to grow it. This is an individualized, distorted pattern - much better would be some way in which the cities could grow their own food not on a family-by-family basis, but for instance on a block-by-block basis. Needless to say, this would then have to be taken into consideration by architects from the very beginning. New research into forms of three-dimensional agriculture would be needed, possibly putting to use the high-rise apartment buildings in our city by having food-producing plants growing up the walls, supported by the structure.¹⁰

Clothing The basic point here seems to be to make clothes last, clothes with which one can identify more so that people literally speaking are more surrounded by things they love. Again the same point comes up: why shouldn't big apartment complexes have collective rooms with equipment installed for making clothing, not just collective rooms for washing ready-made clothes? But there is also scope for continuation of the present dominant

pattern - the whole idea of our argument is not to abolish such a pattern, but simply to roll it back, to some extent, by leaving room for alternative ways and means of production and consumption.¹¹

Housing. One basic point for housing seems to be to make houses that do not reproduce the division of labor of our societies, mirrored in the division of space of our cities with one part for work, one part for living. This distinction should immediately make us suspicious, for there is no sharp line between work and life: to work is to live, and to live is to work - to a large extent - which means that houses in general and apartments in particular should be made in such a way that much more work can take place inside them. Today's situation makes a caricature of homes in the rich countries: they are used for sleeping, quick hurried eating in the morning, then are left empty for a considerable part of the day, and are made use of during the late afternoon and the evening only. It would take no great imagination to envisage a much better use of housing whereby people to a large extent could take their work home and depend on communication and transportation for messages, supply of parts, dispatch of ready-made products, etc. In other words, one could imagine a system in which transportation and communication would be automated, highly effective and at the same time people would to a much larger extent be permitted to work in their homes, together with the people they like to be together with, and when they like. Again, it should be emphasized that this is only seen as a complementary pattern, not as the alternative pattern to the present life style based on commuting between work and home. The idea would simply be to move things and information rather than people.

Apartments have probably come to stay, but facilities for food-making could be more collective, there could be canteens in apartment houses, libraries and study rooms, in addition to the various facilities already mentioned and, of course, kindergartens. The collective unit living in an apartment will probably decreasingly be the family and increasingly some other group, like the communes that have been developing recently in several western countries (and Japan). In sum, it is the re-creation at the local level, but within the modern city setting, of many of the patterns we normally would associate with village cultures, yet dramatically different from villages because it would still

offer the vast variety, even the anonymity of city life.¹²

Health. There should be much more emphasis on healthy life, much less on highly capital- and research-intensive health services, in order to repair the damages brought upon us by our present life style. But again the argument would be the Chinese 'walking on two legs': maintaining and further developing modern medicine, at the same time bringing in traditional medicine, increased capacity for self-healing, more responsibility for others, more ability to comfort, support and live with the diseased and disabled, the sick and the old and the crippled. Again this calls for new architecture, integrating all those in our society defined as 'deviants' and put into corresponding institutions. No doubt there is very much to learn from the Chinese in this field.¹³

Education. One would imagine a de-emphasis on schooling and a re-emphasis on education, for instance the creation in all neighborhoods of 'educational cafeterias'. They would be institutions that look very much like cafés, bistros, Bierstuben - but the 'waiters' would be the educational facilitators and in the 'kitchen' they would have books, learning material of various kinds, and people who can put them together so as to provide a team sitting around a table with a good educational 'meal' for the evening. Public libraries were originally intended to have this function but have somehow become much too similar to museums, for which reason the Bierstuben model just mentioned might be better.¹⁴

But the fundamental point would be to break down walls between work and school by permitting children and adolescents to have serious work tasks from the very beginning. Very much of this could be done at the local level as soon as the neighborhood is able to reconquer the right to produce food and clothes and to design its own housing: children and adolescents would simply participate in all this. Discussions as to how it should best be done would probably be the best educative experience that could be imagined. It would be concrete and at the same time call for the general, abstract knowledge that grows out of real problems.

Transportation In transportation the general idea would be to de-emphasize private travel by motor-car, and to put much more

emphasis on collective transportation and such vehicles as bicycles. Motor-cars should be banned in cities and used for long-distance inter-city traffic only; collective transportation within cities should be made free. At the same time bicycles should be improved, e.g. by making cycling less lonely (the Viet-Nameese have shown how bicycles can be coupled together very easily), by devising good protection against rain and bad weather in general, and by having some kind of bicycle lift (similar to a ski lift) for gradients that are too steep for people to cycle up without assistance. (Such bicycle lifts should not cost much in terms of energy.)

Needless to say, in doing all this one would not only live a much more healthy life, one would also open cities up to become what they should be: giant market-places of ideas, places where people meet, where togetherness is cultivated, where aesthetic values can be enjoyed, where politics can be exercised, something like the old city-states. A walk in Dubrovnik is all that is needed to understand the sense of physical and spiritual well-being that can be derived from cities organized in such a way.¹⁵

Communication. Communication is either based on electromagnetic waves, and not so energy-consuming, or on printing, and in that case highly paper-consuming. If effective ways of recycling paper can be found, or some substitute for paper, there is no reason to assume that communication could not basically continue the way it is except for one factor: the form is much too asymmetric today. Radio, and even more television, has a highly feudal structure, emanating from one point, fragmenting the viewers who sit isolated one from the other in front of their TV sets, making it highly possible for an élite to manipulate the masses. Forms of communication should be evaluated according to their structure, and new forms should be developed that would permit more participation and two-way communication. Cable television at the neighborhood level is a good example here, call-in programs also make the process more symmetric, but no doubt the future could bring many innovations that are structurally more satisfactory if researched were focused in this direction. The same applies to printing: it ought to be much easier to make newspapers, journals, magazines and books by means of cheap printing methods. Access to photocopying devices

and mimeographing devices should be guaranteed to everybody, and at a very low price.

One cannot conclude this type of discussion without some words about energy. Behind everything mentioned above is the need for energy - partly for production, partly for transportation/communication - and the way the energy problem is attacked in what has been said above is evidently along three lines,

First, there is the idea of production with less use of energy. Of course, when production becomes more labor-intensive more human beings need more energy input, a more calorie-rich diet, but this added energy input would be of⁷considerably lower order of magnitude than what is needed for highly capital- and research-intensive production.

Second, there is the idea of less energy for transportation/communication. The basic pattern here would be that of moving people less, making cities in particular and societies in general in such a way that people can do more of their work at home. The assumption is that it is less costly energy-wise to move information and some things than to move people, and by and large this should be correct.

Third, there is the idea of alternative energy sources. Human muscle power is introduced in cycling, and one would add a grid consisting of energy based on non-depletable sources: wind, tidal and other waves, geothermal gradients, sun, waste from organic production and consumption. Taken individually these do not offer solutions, combined they go far towards solving energy problems. But once more the idea would not be to rule out what today are conventional forms of energy, but to roll them somewhat back, to put ceilings on their utilizations and to create a much more flexible, diversified energy pattern which would also be much less vulnerable in times of crisis.

In this connection there is also a structural problem: energy should be produced in such a way that Centre/Periphery gradients do not arise too easily. Ideally energy should be created where it is consumed; it should not be created in one central place in the country or the region and then distributed through complicated lines of transmission. Thus, windmills constitute relatively ideal forms, as is wave-energy and tidal-energy-based energy production in countries with very long coastlines and a narrow hinterland - and as are waterfalls in countries with very

many of them, but not in countries with very few waterfalls, artificial or natural. But once again, this cannot be taken too far and there is scope for both forms. But the present system is far too centralized and among other things makes for societies in which people increasingly become dependent and 'clientelized'.

3. Conclusion

Is it reasonable to assume that a society along the lines we have sketched above would meet our requirements better than what we have at present? This question has to be discussed in an international, a national and a human context.

Internationally the assumption is, more or less, that in some years raw materials in general, and energy in particular, may no longer be forthcoming from the Third World countries. There may also be a similar movement within the industrialized countries: that the Periphery (the 'district') in these countries will be increasingly hesitant when it comes to giving away these precious products, and will increasingly insist on processing them, and consuming the products, themselves. Rich countries and rich districts will then have to fall back upon their own resources, and it is assumed that these will be sufficient provided consumption needs are better tailored to these supplies. Since this situation is likely to arise sooner rather than later, alternative life styles do not constitute a philosophical solution to an abstract problem, but a way out of a political situation that otherwise may take the form of an extremely dangerous crisis, pregnant with the possibility of a world war, direct and indirect intervention in Third World countries and repression in rich countries to suppress movements sympathetic to the Third World.

It is assumed that this is the context which the rich nation state will find itself in, and that this will bring about a need for increased self-reliance internally and also for increased cooperation between rich countries that are close together geographically, politically and culturally, e.g. such groupings as the Nordic countries, the European Community countries, the East European socialist countries and the Mediterranean countries.

Parallel to a decrease in so-called North-South trade we would therefore envisage an increase in North-North trade (and, of course, an increase in South-South trade, but that is not the topic of this paper), at least within the regions and subregions.

This politics of increased regional and national self-reliance in the rich world will have to be coupled with the politics of local self-reliance in that world, at the subnational level. Generally this will go together with increased 'nationalism' of a local character, a phenomenon that has already been observed in the rich world for a long time. Thus, we would generally predict an escalating tendency for 'minorities', ethnically or territorially defined (or usually both) to assert themselves and to couple their demands for increased political autonomy to a local self-reliance that will have to be based on an alternative life style of the type mentioned. It is from such groups rather than from the Centre that initiatives for change are likely to come.¹⁶

But what about the human aspects, particularly the 'immaterial needs'?

In general it can be argued that they stand a better chance of being realized in the type of society outlined above than in present-day western industrial society, at least for the most part.

Take for instance 'togetherness'. The argument above is that division of space the way we have practised it, between town and countryside, between working and living inside towns, keeps people apart and segments them internally so that it becomes impossible to gain control over one's own existence and to be together with other people except in a very limited setting. The vision given of working and living more closely together inside cities is aimed precisely in this direction.

Take 'creativity'. By making production more labor-intensive and, more important, less standardized, the scope for creativity can be regained. What is being said is essentially this: take all the energy that people use for hobbies in order to have an outlet for creative impulses in an industrial society and put it to more productive uses, letting creativity serve a more definite purpose, without in any sense disparaging non-instrumental creative work.

Take the need for 'new experience'. In a society of the type indicated work would be less routinized; no day would have

to look precisely like yesterday; there would be elements of surprise and possibilities for creating separate, individualized life styles or special styles for the collectivity one belongs to. A condition for this, however, is that basic control over the conditions of one's own existence is firm and local, which means some contraction of the economic cycles.

Take the need for 'self-actuation': no doubt this type of society can make use of many more human faculties, particularly if one does not let the pendulum swing entirely to the other extreme in an effort to 'turn back to nature', to re-create some type of village and city-state existence left behind by history. Such efforts are vain, but efforts to integrate the two types of existence, high consumption with low consumption, high energy with low energy, are much more challenging and offer much more variety.

Take 'happiness'. Is it reasonable to assume that this type of society will offer broader scope for happiness? Not necessarily in a flat, trivial sense of that word, in the sense of constant euphoria, but in the broader sense of challenges, of possibility to realize one's own potential in solidarity with others and indeed in solidarity with future generations, of being, not of only having. In this sense the possibilities should be very rich indeed.

And in that would also lie the key, or one of the keys, to the question of 'meaningful life' in general, and individual life in particular: a process of inner human enrichment, where such things as insight, joy and happiness are meaningless unless one also contributes to the insight, joy and happiness of others.

Would people in the rich countries like a life of this type?¹⁷ Maybe it is a bit like asking the alcoholic whether he would prefer a life without alcohol, or the drug addict a drugfree existence. The vision of an alternative existence has to be strong and highly positive, and the supply of the intoxicating substances has to be reduced, perhaps down to zero, for a clear affirmative answer, backed up with action, to be forthcoming.

And that is more or less our situation, addicted as we are to material goods. It is only the combination of limited supply and a strong positive vision that may make us change our ways.

The former condition will probably be taken care of in the future by the peripheries we have dominated so successfully in the past. For the latter - for the idea that an alternative life style could be a better life, not an emergency solution that as in war is abolished once the war is over - we ourselves have to be responsible.

NOTES

1. This paper was prepared for the 1975 Dag Hammarskjöld Project. I am indebted to Anders Wirak of the Chair in Conflict and Peace Research, University of Oslo, for very useful comments, as well as to participants at the annual meeting of the World Future Studies Federation, Berlin, 30-31 May 1975.
2. Consequently, studies like The Limits to Growth, perhaps also Das Kapital, the former critical of economic growth, the latter of capitalism, should not be seen as critical of western civilization. Rather, they are an integral part of that civilization, supplying crisis awareness that will stimulate achievement and counteract any sluggishness. Thus, it is very possible that both books have served as forewarnings for a capitalism gone stale, and have increased the general level of inventiveness.
3. Of course, the simple alternative is not to apply the Kantian norm but to maintain an extremely asymmetric distribution of the fruits of the non-human environment by direct and indirect (structural) violence.
4. Deschooling Society (1971) and Medical Nemesis (1975)
5. And this is the point where overdevelopment may be said to set in: the means available for the satisfaction of human needs are too abundant, to the point of being counterproductive.
6. Thus, privilege in Eastern Europe, including (indeed) the USSR, does not necessarily imply availability of other goods, but easier access to them (and often also to them of higher quality).
7. To the young Gandhi this was an important point: he was convinced that the British derived much of their strength from being meat-eaters. He later on found for himself a form of fighting and collective self-assertion highly compatible with a strict vegetarian diet (satyagraha).
8. The general thesis is, possibly, that people seek something different during their vacation time. Consequently vacation should not be seen as an isolated pattern, but always as dialectically related to regular life, and more particularly as a compensation for the monotony of alienating work.
9. 'I met so many interesting people' - of course, there are also interesting people around in ordinary life, but there are barriers against open conversation. In a camping place, or sharing the same T-bar in the most ordinary ski resort, conversation is more easy and open for insights, e.g. into other life styles, how life looks seen from other angles in domestic and global society, etc.

10. Containers with many holes, filled with soil, also make for three-dimensional agriculture (e.g. for tomatoes), with the plants growing out of holes (water can be supplied from the top).
11. And this is not merely because the dominant pattern is hard to roll back completely, but also because it has positive features. Thus, it probably gives better protection against nature and may serve to even out some of the asymmetries of economic geography (by moving factors and products around).
12. On the other hand, that anonymity may also serve as a protection in some periods of life, giving an opportunity for some withdrawal. What is harmful is to have no choice but to be condemned to city anonymity. For some reflection on this and similar themes relating to the human habitat, see Johan Galtung, "Human Settlements: A Theory, Some Strategies and Some Proposals", paper prepared for the UN Habitat Conference in Dubrovnik, 20/23 May 1975 and for the Dag Hammarskjöld Project.
13. But the Chinese seem to have a sense of inclusive collectivism that makes them all feel members of the same giant community - a theme very different from western individualism and separation of human beings into groups of various kinds. See Johan Galtung and Fumiko Nishimura, Learning From the Chinese People (in press).
14. See Johan Galtung, "Schooling and Future Society", School Review, 1975, pp. 533-67.
15. As a personal observation: in the main street of Dubrovnik my own little boy goes wild of enthusiasm, runs around and bumps into people, enjoying the freedom to move combined with the visibility of so many things in a city built for people, not for motor-cars (only an occasional ambulance).
16. One typical recent example is the Scottish claim on offshore oil and the London idea that 'it belongs to the whole country'. It should be noted that what Scotland wants to use the oil for is not necessarily an alternative life style, however, but a better basis for high-consumption, high-energy life.
17. One way of finding out is to ask them. An interesting study was carried out in Norway by the People's Action for a New Life Style, published in Ny Livsstil, 4-5 October, 1975, based on data collected on a representative sample (600) in August-September 1975. People were asked whether they felt the Norwegian standard of living was 'too high', 'about right' or 'too low'. The answers were: 76 percent, 22 per cent and 1 per cent. Interestingly enough the answers did not correlate much with social position. The highest income group and the highest education groups tended somewhat more in the direction of 'about right' (25 per cent and 34 per cent rather than 22 per cent). When asked what they would prefer,

'a quiet, simple life with all necessary goods but limited income and career opportunity' or 'high income, many material goods and many possibilities for career - but stress both at work and during free time' 74 per cent preferred the former and 23 per cent latter (31 per cent in the highest income group, 38 per cent in the highest education group). Thus, the tendency is quite clear.

One should not generalize this to rich countries, or even to Scandinavian countries, however, According to a Swedish public opinion poll similar questions were asked at about the same time and showed very clearly that the majority of the Swedish people (six out of ten) does not want to reduce working hours if it implies reduced income (Sydsvenska Dagbladet, 27 October 1975).